

COINS

Real or phony? Two B.C. coins pose A.D. dilemma

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about old coins.

Q—Recently I added to my collection two ancient coins that were issued in about 330 B.C. I bought them from a well-known dealer who provided certificates with each coin. My brother thinks the coins might have been duplicated and are not originals. Any comments would be appreciated.—C. C., Chicago.

A—Worthless copies exist of most valuable, collectible coins. To avoid getting taken, collectors should patronize well-established, expert dealers, just as you apparently have done.

If you share your brother's concern, show the coins to a couple of other dealers or collectors for independent evaluations. Almost any reputable dealer will refund the full purchase price if a coin he or she sold is discovered to be a fake.

Q—Why does Miss Liberty appear on so many of our coins made during the 1800s? Also, which president was the first to be placed on a coin?—M. D., Lockport.

A—During the 19th Century and earlier, most European countries depicted kings or other supreme rulers on their coinage. United States government leaders did not want to equate democratically elected presidents with kings, and thus chose designs of Miss Liberty for coins.

The unwritten rule was broken in 1900 when the likeness of George Washington appeared on a commemorative silver dollar. Abraham Lincoln—depicted on the cent since 1909—was the first president on a coin made for general circulation.

Q—Please give me your opinion of a coin I have: a dime dated 1943 that's as large as a Lincoln cent and is the color of the 1943 wartime pennies. Would it be possible to stamp a dime on a penny slug?—K. R., Janesville, Wis.

A—The experts say it's impossible for any coin to be struck on a slug that is larger than the one intended. For example, a quarter could be struck [by accident] on a slug meant for use to make a dime, but not a slug meant for use to make a half-dollar.

● **Quick:** What important coin-related event happened during this week in history?

With help from a wall calendar for collectors, the answer is easy: Uncle Sam made the country's first dimes in 1796, coins that sell today for \$400 and up.

A Wisconsin company published the 1982 calendar, which is loaded with more than 200 numismatic tidbits printed on the appropriate date blocks. The calendar measures 11 by 17 inches when open and includes 12 color photographs of coins featuring women.

To order a copy, send \$4 to Krause Publications Inc., 700 E. State St., Iola, Wis. 54990.